

The NICHD Connection

March 2017

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Former Fellow Follow-up with NASA Support Scientist Dr. Anthony Hickey

In preparation for the 13th Annual NICHD Fellows Meeting, *The NICHD Connection* is offering a sneak peek at the career of Dr. Anthony Hickey, NASA support scientist and one of this year's retreat career speakers. Dr. Hickey spent two wonderful years as a postdoc at NICHD working under Dr. Henry Levin's mentorship. His work involved characterizing retrotransposons and their insertion sites in the yeast genome. Check out our Q&A with Dr. Hickey and get your own questions ready for when you can meet him in person this May.



Dr. Anthony Hickey

Can you tell us a little about your role as a Support Scientist to NASA's Space Biology Program?

The NASA Space Biology program funds research projects that characterize how biological systems respond to spaceflight, or spaceflight-like conditions. Scientists seeking NASA Space Biology funding must submit grant proposals, which are peer-reviewed in a manner similar to grants submitted to NIH. My primary responsibilities are to assist the Space Biology Program Scientist at NASA in:

1. Making programmatic decisions regarding what type of research the Space Biology Program plans to solicit proposals for
2. Writing NASA research announcements/solicitations
3. Summarizing the highlights of peer review and conducting the final selection of proposals

Because space biology research covers many different topics in biology, including genetics, immunology, and microbiology, the position calls for someone with a diverse background in biological sciences, as well as the

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Letter from the Editor

Registration for the **13th Annual NICHD Fellows Meeting** is open! After months of coordination, the retreat steering committee has assembled an exciting agenda “all about careers.” If I could jump from the computer screen (or smart phone) to convince you to sign up, I would! Yes, it’s that good.

To give you a sneak peek at the insanely cool careers represented at the retreat, we have a **former fellow follow-up with Dr. Anthony Hickey**, support scientist for the NASA Space Biology Program. You read that right—Dr. Hickey works with NASA! I mean come on, how cool is that? Keep reading and you’ll also find **additional retreat info**, poster prep tips, and the 2017 fellows retreat image competition winner.

We round out the issue with a **warm hello to our newest NICHD fellows** and a fond farewell to our recent PhD graduates—many of whom I had the privilege to work with on newsletter articles. I look forward to future Q&As with NICHD graduates as they continue into careers of their own.

On a final note, if you are interested in covering any part of the retreat on May 1, please contact me at **Shana.Spindler@gmail.com**. The retreat recaps are an important way to document the wonderful talks and discussions during the event.

Your Editor in Chief,
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

Questions, comments, or ideas? Send them along to **Shana.Spindler@gmail.com**.



Former Fellow Follow-up with Dr. Anthony Hickey

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ability to convert complex scientific information into language that non-scientists can understand.

What's your typical day like?

With this position, there really is no such thing as typical day, as each day has its own unique challenges and tasks to complete. One day, the focus of my work may involve helping the Program Scientists write and release a solicitation. Another day, I may be spending my time assisting in the selection process of grants. On other days, I may be on travel to the other NASA Centers across the country, to interact with our colleagues at NASA Ames Research Center in California or the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, and exchange information.

When did you start thinking about a career like this? Were you always interested in space biology?

I kept an open mind about my career choices early on. I was not inclined to go the traditional academic research route, and my approach when looking for a new job was to apply for any opportunities that aligned with my skills and training. A chance to work with NASA is an incredible opportunity, and I consider myself most fortunate to have been selected for this position.

How did you find the NASA position?

I found the job posting on either Simplyhired.com or Indeed.com. I have found both of those websites to be tremendous resources when looking for relevant open positions.

What was the application/hiring process like? Did it take a long time?

My hiring process was relatively quick. About four to six weeks after submitting my application, I was contacted for a phone interview for the position with the hiring manager and one of the scientists. A week or two later, I was asked to come in person to the NASA Research and Education Support Services (NRESS) to interview face to face with the NASA Space Biology Program Scientist. I was offered the position about two weeks thereafter.

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Former Fellow Follow-up with Dr. Anthony Hickey

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Which skill sets from the lab do you think best apply to becoming a support scientist?

While my current position is not a lab bench position, I believe that my extensive background in multiple scientific disciplines has helped prepare me for the job. My research career began with *Drosophila* genetics, then changed focus to microbial disease, and then eventually immunology. As a postdoc, I worked in yeast genetics and bioinformatics. This multidisciplinary research and training has provided me with the diverse skill sets required for a support scientist involved in Space Biology Research, which encompasses many different topics of biological research.

What activities or resources at the NIH helped prepare you for your career transition?

Networking at NIH and within NICHD. It was at an NICHD retreat that I met Shana Spindler, the editor of *The NICHD Connection*, who introduced me to the world of writing science content articles for nonscientists. Even though I thought I was good at translating scientific jargon into “layman’s terms,” my experience writing for *The NICHD Connection* helped me fine tune my writing abilities, which are important in my current position. I also highly recommend using the resources in the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education, especially the resume building resources. They gave me some of the best advice I had ever received regarding writing a clear and potent resume/CV. I recommend that current NIH postdocs seek OITE resources if they have not done so already.

What do you find most exciting about your career?

The fact that I work with NASA! It really doesn’t get more exciting than that for me. Up until this point in my career, I have taken the fact that we conduct most of our experiments on Earth for granted. Add the variables associated with spaceflight to a biological system, and one will not only begin to observe some fascinating effects, but one will also soon come to appreciate how existence on the Earth has truly shaped the biology of all living systems. It’s quite humbling really. I enjoy my role as a support scientist in helping this important research work progress. The most rewarding aspect for me is that I learn new and fascinating science and technology in the process.

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Former Fellow Follow-up with Dr. Anthony Hickey

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What do you find most challenging?

My day in this position is anything but routine. Each day has its own challenges and requirements, and one needs to be flexible, multi-task and prioritize quickly. You would think that working in a lab setting would help someone prepare for such a scenario, but that is only partially the case. While flexibility and adaptability are required to perform experiments, scientists (at least at the postdoc level) are usually focused on one or two main objectives at time, whether it be getting enough data for a manuscript, or finishing a postdoc grant application. In my current position, projects and priorities are constantly evolving, so you really need to learn quickly how to prioritize and time your efforts accordingly.

Do you have any advice for fellows who are thinking about entering a similar career field?

Yes. Take time outside of your (already busy) life in the lab to develop your soft skills. Participate in steering committee meetings. Help organize an event. Contribute articles to a scientific newsletter. All of these things are not only resume builders but they will help you acquire necessary skills to be successful both inside and outside the lab and network outside of your usual sphere. Don't be afraid to think outside the box when looking for jobs. What I mean by this is if you see a position that looks interesting, even if it is not in your direct area of expertise...apply! I honestly thought when submitting my application for my current position that even getting to the phone interview stage would be a long shot. I knew, however, that I would love the job if I got it. I didn't want to be the one to disqualify myself, so I applied anyway.

If you have questions or comments for Dr. Hickey, please contact him at **AnthonyJHickey@gmail.com**.

Thirteenth Annual Retreat for NICHD Fellows: Registration Now Open!

NICHD fellows are welcome to register for the Thirteenth Annual Meeting for Postdoctoral, Clinical, and Visiting Fellows and Graduate Students at <http://retreat.nichd.nih.gov/registration.html>. The registration and abstract submission deadline is Friday, March 31, 2017.

This year's focus is **all about careers**, with keynote speakers **Dr. Peter Agre** (2003 Nobel Prize in Chemistry winner) and **Dr. Adam Ruben** (writer, comedian, and molecular biologist).

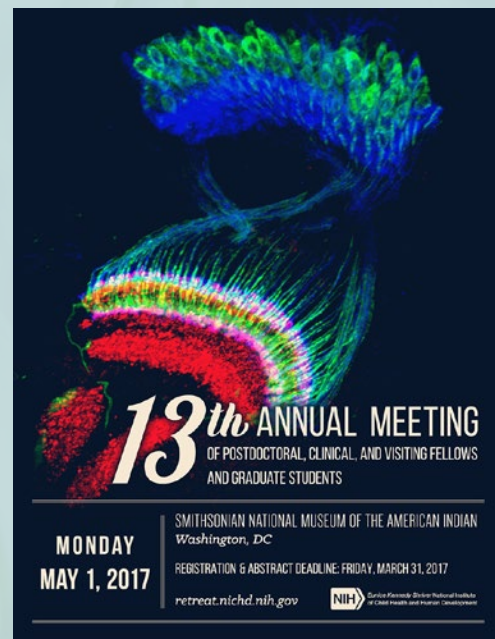
Learn about different career options from our career speaker line up, including:

- » **Sadie Bergeron, PhD**, Assistant Professor at West Virginia University
- » **Stephanie Cologna, PhD**, Assistant Professor at University of Illinois at Chicago
- » **Rebecca Hammond, PhD**, Director of In Vivo Pharmacology at Sage Therapeutics
- » **Yolanda Mock Hawkins, PhD, MBA**, Technology Transfer Specialist at the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research at the FDA
- » **Anthony Hickey, PhD**, contracted Support Scientist to the NASA Space Biology Program
- » **John Reich, PhD**, Scientific Program Director at the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research
- » **Megan Sampley, PhD**, Program Manager for the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- » **Prasanna Satpute-Krishnan, PhD**, Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
- » **Susmeeta Sharma, MD**, Director of Pituitary Endocrinology at the MedStar Pituitary Center

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DR. LUO WINS 2017 FELLOWS RETREAT IMAGE COMPETITION

Congratulations to **Dr. Jiannan Luo** of the Lee lab, winner of the 2017 Fellows Retreat Image Competition. His winning image of the optic lobe of a pupal *Drosophila* brain will be showcased on the retreat website, on posters, and used as the front cover of the event program. The competition this year dazzled—check out all image submissions on the [retreat website](http://retreat.nichd.nih.gov).



▲ Thin section of the optic lobe of a pupal *Drosophila* brain (40 hours after puparium formation). Axons of photoreceptors (blue) and lamina neurons (green) bypass the first neuropil (called the lamina) and project into different layers of the second neuropil (called the medulla, red, center), where the visual information is integrated and processed and further relayed to higher order neuropils (known as the lobula complex, red, under medulla). The medulla neuropil is well-organized in the columnar and stratified structure, typically seen in the human visual system.

Thirteenth Annual Retreat for NICHD Fellows: Registration Now Open!

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Speaker profiles, meeting agenda, and poster information can be found on the retreat website at <http://retreat.nichd.nih.gov>. Register soon—*there are only 110 fellow slots!*

Also, if you are interested in covering any part of the meeting for *The NICHD Connection*, please contact our editor Dr. Shana Spindler before April 14 at Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.

See you there!

POSTER PREP

Are you planning to make a poster for this year's retreat? Check out the following articles for advice on poster design, vector illustrations, poster technology, and important copyright information.

["Using Graphic Design to Enhance Visual Communication in Scientific Posters"](#)

["What's a Vector, Vector?"](#)

["How to Improve Your Poster Using Technology"](#)

["What You Need to Know About Copyrights"](#)



Congrats to Our Latest GPP Graduation Award Recipients

Four NICHD Graduate Partnership Program students received their doctoral degrees in 2016. Please join *The NICHD Connection* in wishing our graduates a bright future ahead!

CAITLIN MOIRA FOX, PhD

Dissertation title: "The Role of Heparan Sulfate Proteoglycans During Development of the Zebrafish Lateral Line"

NICHD mentor: Dr. Ajay Chitnis

Partner school: Johns Hopkins University

RAFAEL MASO PRÉVIDE, PhD

Dissertation title: "Acute and Long Term Effects of Triiodothyronine on the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axys and its Physiological Importance"

NICHD mentor: Dr. Stanko Stojilkovic

Partner mentor and school: Dr. Maria Tereza Nunes, University of São Paulo

JENNA MARLEE SHAPIRO, PhD

Dissertation title: "Hydrogel Substrate Effects on Protein Kinase A and Osteogenesis"

NICHD mentor: Dr. Constantine Stratakis

Partner mentor and school: Dr. Michelle Oyen, University of Cambridge

DEZMOND TAYLOR-DOUGLAS, PhD

Dissertation title: "The Role of MC3R in the Regulation of Lipogenic and Lipolytic Processes in Mice"

NICHD mentor: Dr. Jack Yanovski

Partner mentor and school: Dr. Kebreten Manaye, Howard University

Meet Our New Fellows

We are happy to welcome two new fellows to the NICHD family. If you recently arrived at the NICHD and would like to be introduced in our quarterly "Meet Our New Fellows" column, please contact our editor, Dr. Shana Spindler, at Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.



ARUP CHAKRABORTY

Postdoctoral Fellow

Home city and country: Kolkata, India

Degree institution: National Cancer Institute and Texas Tech University

NICHD mentor: Dr. Melvin DePamphilis

Area of research: I am studying the role of DNA re-replication inhibitor protein geminin in human embryonic stem cells.



VANESSA BONETTI

Home city and state: Potomac, Maryland

Degree institution: University of Maryland, College Park

NICHD mentor: Dr. Stephen Suomi

Area of research: I am studying the early life determinants of social, emotional, and cognitive functioning in nonhuman primate models of child development.

March Announcements

2017 MENTOR OF YEAR AWARDS: ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS NOW!

Do you have an outstanding mentor?

The time has come for you to nominate your fellow or PI for the 2017 NICHD Mentor of the Year Awards. This is your chance to recognize an individual in the Division of Intramural Research (DIR) whose mentoring has made a difference in your life at the NIH!

Below is the link to obtain information about the NICHD's two annual intramural Mentor of the Year Awards, one for a fellow and one for an investigator. Please submit your nomination form and a 500-word (maximum) narrative electronically to Yvette Pittman (yvette.pittman@nih.gov). The submission deadline is **Monday, May 8th**.

Contact the Office of Education, if you have any questions about the nomination instructions and selection process.

<https://science.nichd.nih.gov/confluence/display/fellows/Mentor+of+the+Year+Awards+2017>

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Nominations are invited for two **Mentor of the Year** awards, one for an **investigator** (tenured, tenure-track, staff clinician, staff scientist) and one for a **fellow** (postdoctoral, clinical, visiting, or research fellows).

DEADLINE:
Monday, May 8, 2017

DETAILS & NOMINATION FORMS AT
fellows.nichd.nih.gov

NIH Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

March Announcements

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THE 2018 FARE COMPETITION FOR INTRAMURAL NIH IS NOW OPEN

An opportunity to win a \$1000 travel award

The FARE (Fellows Award for Research Excellence) competition provides recognition for outstanding scientific research. The 2018 winners will receive a \$1,000 travel award for a scientific meeting you plan to attend during the fiscal year 2018. Eligible fellows may submit an abstract online from February 16, 2017 to March 16, 2017 at <http://www2.training.nih.gov/transfer/fareapp>.

The FARE 2018 competition is open to postdoctoral IRTAs, pre-IRTAs, visiting fellows, and other fellows with less than five years total of intramural postdoctoral experience.

Abstracts will be evaluated anonymously on the basis of scientific merit, originality, experimental design, and overall quality/presentation, and winners will be announced by August 15, 2016.

The top twenty-five percent of applicants will receive an award to be used between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018. More information regarding the FARE Rules and Regulations can be found at <https://www.training.nih.gov/felcom/fare/faqs>.

RECRUITING NICHD POSTER JUDGES FOR THE 2017 NIH POSTBAC POSTER DAY!

Please contact Dr. Yvette Pittman at yvette.pittman@nih.gov if you would like to help judge the NICHD postbaccalaureate fellows' posters in May. We would like to recruit a few postdoc and graduate student judges—to visit about five posters each and attend a meeting to select the three “best poster” winners for 2017. This can be a great learning experience for both the judges and postbac trainees!

Postbac Poster Day will take place on Thursday, May 4. For more information about the event, please visit https://www.training.nih.gov/postbac_poster_day.

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March Announcements

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THE WE COMMITTEE PRESENTS PI DAY 2017

Pi Day \ˈpī ˈdā\ – the annual celebration commemorating the mathematical constant π .

Tuesday, March 14th

6710B Rockledge Drive, Multipurpose room

1425 & 1427

NICHD will mark this significant occasion with a pie bake-off, open to all. Please plan to join us. You don't have to bring a pie to participate—we need eaters, too!

12:00 p.m. – Pie entries due

1:00-3:00 p.m. – Pie eating/judging

For more information, or to sign up to submit a pie, contact the Worklife Enrichment (WE) Committee at nichdwecommittee@mail.nih.gov.

Staff and fellows wishing to participate should get concurrence from their supervisor before attending this activity.



Classic Apple Pie: One of the many delicious pies sampled at last year's Pi Day Pie contest

PRE-REGISTER THIS MONTH FOR THE 2017 TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY

This year's **Take Your Child to Work Day** is **Thursday, April 27th**, an exciting day filled with activities designed to instill in your kids a fascination for science and exploration. The event is held in conjunction with Earth Day. Thank you to all who have volunteered in the past, dazzling youngsters with cool exhibits and hands-on activities. And thank you to those who have already reached out to confirm your participation again.

Pre-registration opens on **March 16 at noon**; at this time, you will be able to enter information on your child or children participating, as well as view NIH-wide activities, on and off-campus.

During Take Your Child to Work Day, NICHD will offer several programs at our Rockledge offices as well as on the main campus. Among the activities already confirmed for 2017:

- » *Tour of the Zebrafish facility* and behind the scenes peak into Ben Feldman's lab
- » *Drunken Brain* – Dennis Twombly offers a multi-sensory exhibit on the effects of alcohol on the brain
- » *The World of Prosthetics* – Youngsters will be able to handle prosthetics and collect their own muscle signals
- » *Good Bug/Bad Bug* – Exploring the wide world of germs with Vanessa Gorham
- » *What's that Smell* – Peering through microscopes, students get a good look at a locust's brain and learn how the brain responds to sensory stimuli
- » *Science of Mind and Body Practices* – Yoga with Valerie – a favorite of parents too

If you would like to volunteer for Earth Day activities, please contact Debbie Clay at Debbie.Clay@nih.gov.

March Events

We encourage you to check out the variety of events hosted by the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) this month. We've selected several programs that may be of interest to NICHD fellows, but for a full list of offerings, please visit the [OITE Upcoming Events page](#).

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 9 AM – 4 PM

Grant Writing 101

Sharon Milgram, PhD, Director, OITE
Building 10, Masur Auditorium

This day-long grant writing overview will happen in two parts:

Part 1: Understanding Grant Writing 9 AM to 11 AM

Description: This part will help you understand the process of grant writing. Topics will include finding funding opportunities (including NIH training and career awards), understanding the NIH grant process, and an insight into the peer-review process.

Part 2: Writing a Grant Application Noon to 4 PM

Description: This second part will help you understand how to write a competitive grant application, including a discussion of the major components of research, training and career development grants. Topics include strategies for writing grants, developing your specific aims and responding to grant reviews.

This workshop is intended to provide the background fellows need to begin crafting a grant application; it does not involve written assignments or feedback on drafts of applications. You are welcome to attend only one or both sessions.

Registration and more information

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March Events

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TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 12 – 1 PM

Mom-Dad-Docs: Raising Healthy Kids in an Unhealthy World
Building 35 (Porter), 3G 600 (Blue Skybox)

Childhood obesity is a huge topic in today's media due to its prevalence in the US. But what is fact and what are myths? How do we, as parents, deal with the information and what are the pitfalls we need to be aware of raising our children to be healthy eaters? Dr. Susan Yanovski (NIDDK) will share the newest facts about childhood obesity and how we can help our children develop a healthy relationship to food.

BYOL — Lunch will not be provided, but we welcome attendees to bring lunch with them to the event.

Registration and more information

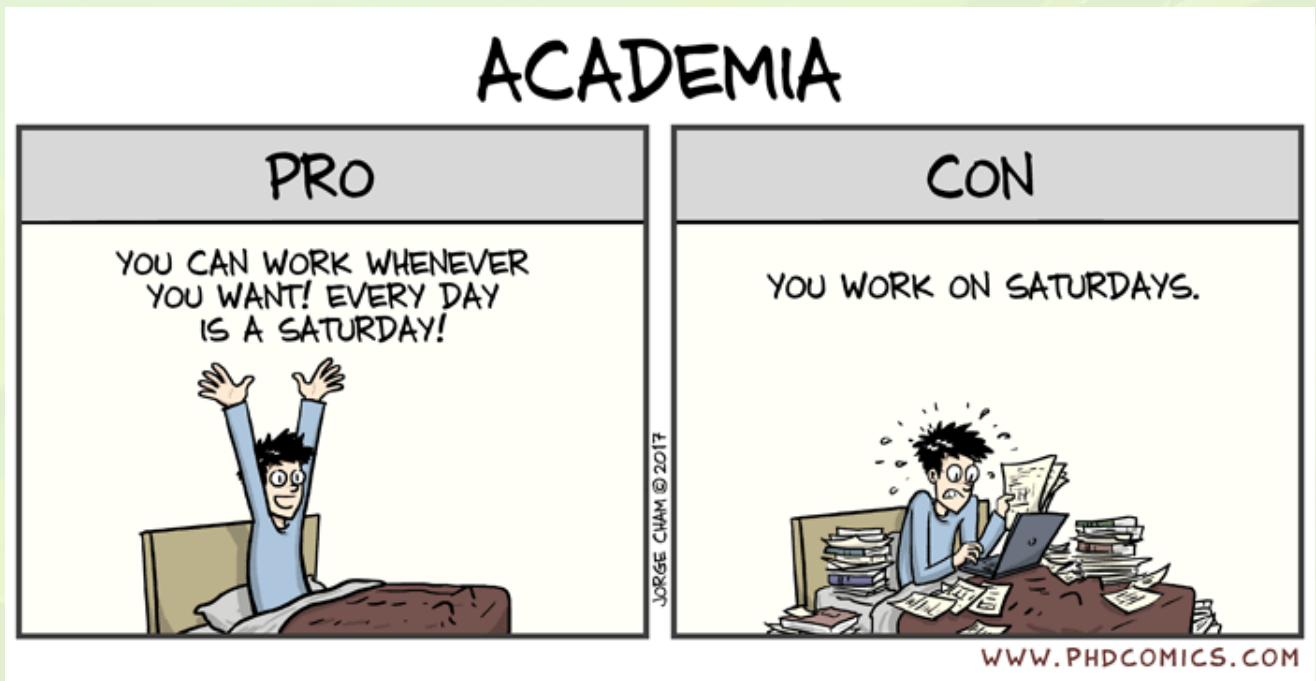
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 10 AM – 12 PM

Talking Science: Designing and Delivering Successful Oral Presentations
Philip Wang, PhD, Deputy Director, GPP
Building 50, Room 1227/1328

Science isn't complete until the results have been shared with interested others, and talking about your results is one of the important ways of making them public. This presentation will address topics including the anatomy of a science talk, creating successful slides, delivering your content convincingly, ensuring that your talk is well-received, and answering questions. The information will help you with presentations in group meetings, presenting findings at conferences and meetings, and delivering scientific talks to a wide variety of audiences.

Registration and more information

PhD Comics



<http://phdcomics.com/comics/archive.php?comicid=1924>